



MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

EVAN GLASS
COUNCILMEMBER
AT-LARGE

TRANSPORTATION & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE;
LEAD FOR HOMELESSNESS AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Wade Holland, Vision Zero Coordinator
FROM: Councilmember Evan Glass
DATE: February 5, 2021
SUBJECT: Vision Zero Next Steps

On January 23, I hosted a Vision Zero conference attended by hundreds of county residents interested in safer streets. The attendees offered us no shortage of ideas for how the county could better achieve pedestrian and street safety and how best to create a more accessible and equitable transportation network. I would like to touch on some of the main themes that we heard during the town hall and a few action items that I would like updates on going forward.

Vision Zero must engage all county residents

Many residents stated that the county should better engage diverse and low-income communities. The people most adversely affected by pedestrian collisions in Montgomery County are communities of color. Unfortunately, Black and Latino voices are too often not engaged as the county considers strategies to reduce traffic collisions. The result is often proposed solutions that are not reflective of solutions supported by those who live in the neighborhood.

As our new Vision Zero Coordinator, I encourage you to be creative in engaging in these historically less-heard communities. During the discussion of the recent Veirs Mill Corridor Master Plan the Council hosted a public hearing in the community to foster greater engagement, and as a result we saw some of the most diverse and insightful testimony ever for such a plan. I urge you and your colleagues to pursue such methods of engaging directly with communities that have higher pedestrian and bicycle fatalities.

Residents want to see results

Our residents want to see that real progress is being made to advance Vision Zero and reduce traffic fatalities. 2020 was unfortunately marked by more pedestrian fatalities than we had seen in 2019. Residents are understandably frustrated at the apparent lack of progress nearly five years after the Council adopted the Vision Zero goal. Many residents are apprehensive about our Vision Zero strategy.

Acknowledging these sentiments I ask that you work with MCDOT and MDOT SHA to explore interim and short-term solutions that could be implemented quicker than traditional traffic engineering treatments. We have seen that tools like speed radar signs and bulb outs can be very effective at reducing speeding, for example. We also know that many of our serious and fatal pedestrian collisions occur at night or dusk. Better lighting at intersections and dark stretches of road can provide both drivers and vulnerable road users with better visibility to see and be seen.

Automated enforcement is also another tool at our disposal that can be used to curb dangerous driving. I encourage you to work with the county police's Automated Enforcement Unit to find ways that cameras could be deployed to trouble spots more quickly. Many of the attendees made comments in support of greater deployment of automated enforcement as a way of reducing traffic violations with less potential for bias.

Make near-term improvements to the high injury network

Many of the streets and roads that residents raised concerns about during the town hall are located on the high injury network--roads and corridors that see higher frequencies of serious or fatal collisions. Many of these corridors are in areas with significant Black or Latino populations, such as the Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard corridors. Please work with MCDOT and SHA to identify near-term treatments that can be used to make some of these corridors safer for all road users using some of the tools mentioned above.

Build upon the Vision Zero progress table

The progress table currently provides status updates on our 30+ Vision Zero action items. While it is useful information, residents think more could be done to profile both progress and to convey engineering or other speed bumps that are holding up improvements desired by the community. We received many comments at the event from residents who had requested lower speed limits, new crosswalks, or new sidewalks that had been rejected or indefinitely delayed by either MCDOT or MDOT SHA.

Providing greater transparency about what goes into these decisions and how the decision-making process is carried out will give residents more information to advocate for improvements and it will provide greater accountability to community requests. Too often a community will spend time and effort pushing for something like a new traffic signal only to have it rejected after years of study with an unsatisfactory explanation given for the decision. Access to information and the decision-making process will foster greater trust among the public that the county is serious about pursuing these goals.

Going forward

I thank you again for all of the hard work you have done since becoming Vision Zero Coordinator and in your prior interim role over the past several years. Montgomery County is a leader among suburban jurisdictions in implementing Vision Zero and acting upon our goals. I trust that you will keep us moving in the right direction through community engagement.

cc: Director Chris Conklin, MCDOT
Acting District Engineer Erica Rigby, MDOT SHA